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UR a target for spies, says think tank

But some say we're trying to do same thing in U.S.S.R.

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The doors of research facilities at the University of Rochester have swung open freely to Soviet visitors for the last 12 years.

In that time, at least one alleged Soviet spy has visited here and gathered information for the Russian KGB, an international strategic trade consultant says.

Some federal officials suspect that other visiting Soviet academics have done similar work for the KGB.

Such visits by intelligence agents posing as scholars are not

unusual, federal officials say. It is believed by some professors and federal officials that most, if not all, Soviet visitors to U.S. research institutions are Communist Party members trained by the KGB.

That's why doors at research facilities here and at other institutions around the country are beginning to close to Soviet visitors.

If some anti-Soviet hardliners in the Reagan administration have their way, the doors will soon slam shut.

At stake, congressmen and intelligence agents claim, is our national security — particularly our technological superiority over the Soviets in the fields of electrical engineering, physics, computer science and chemistry.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER, with its laser energetics lab and vast research facilities, is a target for Soviet espionage, said Dr. Miles Costick, head of the Washington-based Institute for Strategic Trade, a think tank specializing in economic and strategic

affairs. Costick frequently testifies at congressional hearings about the dangers of technology transfer to unfriendly countries.

Dr. Moshe Lubin, director of the laser lab until seven months ago when he left to take a position with Standard Oil of Ohio, said, "The Soviet exchange (program) is abominable. They are all (Communist) party members briefed by their intelligence agents."

The alleged Russian spy who visited the UR was Sergei Molotchkov, Costick said.

Molotchkov came here as a guest of the university's political science department through the International Research and Exchange (IREX) program in 1978.

The UR has been active in IREX and several other exchange programs since detente opened the doors between the two countries about a dozen years ago.

"MOLOTHKOV IS A KGB MAN, no doubt," said Costick, who has interviewed 120 Russian visitors over the last 13 years. "He has been at various places under various disguises collecting everything he could."

Molotchkov has been a prime suspect, Costick said, in numerous international investigations of intelligence operations involving science and technology transfer.

The FBI and CIA refused to comment on Molotchkov, who is not in the U.S. now and probably will never be allowed back in, according to Costick.

People at the university became suspicious when he was here, according to Professor Peter Regenstrief, who hosted Molotchkov.

The CIA was contacted, sources said, and a CIA agent in Rochester investigated and made a report on Molotchkov to intelligence officials in Washington.

"I suspected him of unbelievable mischief," Regenstrief said.

While at the UR, Molotchkov was especially interested in Canadian-U.S. relations, Regenstrief said, and spent considerable time studying oil exploration in the two countries. "He spent a lot of time at the Xerox machine" copying technical and political documents, said Regenstrief.

THERE IS GROWING CONCERN in Washington about such activities which, though they may appear harmless, could threaten national security.

A former intelligence officer of a Communist country told the FBI that his operation spent an entire year devising ways to get access to an important U.S. computer, according to an Aug. 1 report by FBI Director William Webster.

Intelligence operations, a recent Pentagon report said, have enabled the Soviets to rapidly close the technology gap between the two countries.

"With technology transfer," Costick said, "we've saved the Soviets \$100 billion in research and development costs. We've supported their looting for 12 years."

This spying, however, does seem to be a two-way street. U.S. professors going to Russia are interrogated by the CIA before leaving, said Professor Barbara Meehan-Walters, co-director of the UR's Russian Studies program and IREX exchange.